NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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Enhanced National Weather Service Radar to Improve Precipitation Estimates and Severe Weather Warnings

The National Weather Service is improving its Doppler radar serving Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands by installing the latest dual-polarization technology. This technology will give forecasters better information about heavy rainfall in flooding events, hail detection in thunderstorms, and even recognize whether precipitation is in the form of rain or ice (it will also indicate if it is snow, but it won't be necessary for our area)

"This is the most significant upgrade to the nation's weather radar network since Doppler radar was first installed in the early 1990s and is a significant step toward us becoming weather ready," said Laura Furgione, deputy director of the National Weather Service. "Dual-polarization technology provides significantly more information and clearer pictures of current weather conditions, helping National Weather Service meteorologists provide more accurate and timely forecasts."

Currently, National Weather Service Doppler radars provide forecasters information on precipitation intensity and movement (direction and speed). Dual-polarization technology adds new information about the size and shape of airborne objects, which will improve estimates of how much rain is falling, improving flash flood detection and warnings.

"This radar upgrade will help us provide better forecasts and warnings of flooding and severe weather for the residents and visitors of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands," said Roberto García, meteorologist-in-charge (MIC) of the National Weather Service office in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Installation will begin March 4th and will last approximately 12 days. During the upgrade, adjacent Federal Aviation Administration weather terminal radar will provide coverage. Installation of dual-polarization technology in all 122 National Weather Service radars is expected to be completed by mid-2013. Thirty-eight other operational WSR-88D systems, owned by the Air Force and FAA, will also be enhanced.

The National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories. It operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world, helping to protect lives and property and enhance the national economy. Working with partners, the National Weather Service is building a Weather-Ready Nation to support community resilience in the face of increasing vulnerability to extreme weather. Visit us online at http://www.weather.gov/sju/?n=dualpol and on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/US.NationalWeatherService.SanJuan.gov

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